Andy Vargo

Dodson: The date is Tuesday, March 30, 1976

This a seminar to be addressed by Mr. Andy Vargo, pioneer real estate man in the Valley. We have invited students from several classes, selected students, selected by their instructors, to come over and hear Mr. Vargo.The seminar is being held in Room 15 B of the Museum.

Mr. Vargo will tell us something about the early history of the Valley. He invites you all to ask any question that you might ask. Mr. Vargo, it is all yours.

Vargo: Thank you very much. If somebody will ask me something I'll try to answer it the best I can.

Question: Tell about (the early Lockheed Airport)

Vargo: One of the interesting incidents in my life is getting together the land for what is now the Burbank Airport. This was in 1928. Most people think that Lockheed was the prime mover in that but they weren't. The Boeing Aircraft Co. of Seattle wanted to put an airport in Los Angeles or Burbank.So they asked their attorneys Newlove and Ashburn (?). Who in turn asked the Security Bank who would be available to get the land together. The firm that subdivided Toluca Lake orginally in 1923 branched out into other activities. They started the Metropolitan Airport. which is now the Van Nuys Airport. And subsequently fell on hard times and the city eventually acquired it. Because of their experience in forming the Metropolitan Airport. When they told me about it I suggested they buy some of the adjoining lands. I thought it would be a good investment and room for expansion. So ... I forget how many pieces I secured for what is now the Van Nuys Airport. Probably three or four .. totalling a 100 acres.

So from that beginning, the Security Bank recommended the firm of Hefferman (?) , Hefferman, McCray and St. John (?). for the original subdividers of Toluca Lake. (I) was associated with them from the beginning as salesman. vacant lots . . .

Getting back to the Burbank Airport, after looking all over the Valley for suitable property that could be put together and didn't have the high lines that conversed the Valley to interfere with or roads, we discovered the property where the Burbank Airport is now was very adaptable.

The situation was such that when you gather together land for a purpose and have to get adjacent parcels you cannot disclose to others, as you are doing it, what the purpose is or you'll run into difficulty. One person can block the entire transaction. This is the thing that had one, two, three, four, five . . . seven parcels total 236 acres eventually, put together for a total of $720,500, Mind you, this is in 1928,

And just as a sideline, in 1929 came the depression and you'd been able to buy the same property for half or less because money just became that scarce.

You see this worn piece of paper -- I carry this in my billfold. This represents how I kept track of the various

parcels and how much we paid for each.

So this is briefly the history of Burbank Airport. As a sideline, Mr. Taylo mentioned about the vineyards and wine. Well, 88 acres of the northern portion of the Burbank Airport was in a vineyard.

There was a bachlor Italian there who farmed it for the people that cultivated it. And he had five 1,000 gallon vats in his yard in which he pressed the grapes as he harvested them. He pressed them and put them into these different vats. Then came along Probition. So the poor devil, in order to have eating money he would sell you a gallon or so for 50 cents. So . . . That was in violation of the law so the federal agency came in there and opened the spigots on those five 1,000 gallon vats. So the Burbank Airport was inundated with five thousand gallons of wine. It upset him so badly that I'm told his hair went white, though he was only 36 years old, which is understandable, because that was a lot of work that went into it.

VARGO: Well, somebody ask me . . .

Question:I wonder if you could tell us when you came to the Valley and why.

VARGO: Well, the first time I came to the Valley was in July, 1923. I was a lot salesman for the unsold lots in the city of El Segundo. And incidetnally someone asked me about vocations. I was out of a job or out of work at the time so a friend of mine conned me into going to El Segundo and try to sell those vacant lots.

I said I can't sell real estate.But having nothing to do I went out there. They opened on a Sunday. There were five or six of us in a room and nothing was happening. So they all went out to lunch. A couple came in and asked, "What do you have here?"

I said, "We have lots". And then it dawned on me to ask if they would like to see one. And they said, "Yes."

So if you ever go through the city of El Segundo, you'll notice that there is a hill there with a gas . . . a water tank on top of it.

I took these people and showed them a corner lot and they said "We'll take it." So at the end of the day I had made $84. It dawned on me to say, "How long has this been going on?" So 52 years later I'm still in the real estate business. But retired now.

But to answer your question, I came to Toluca Lake in 1923 when there were no roads. I remember we came down Dark Canyon road. There was no Riverside Dr. But we came in from the east side at approximately where Moorpark now terminates. There was a two-strand wire fence across there, while I got out of the car and stood on the fence, the wire there, The man with me . . , or I was with, I forget which, float across, went around, at approximately where Forman Ave and Navajo St is now.

There was a ranch house there, probably the Forman Ranch as the area was known, a man was pressing apples. I held a cup under his press and got some cidar right from the apples. We

looked at it, the other man and I, we were salesmen, real estate, and the firm told us we were going to subdivide into lots. We looked around and said, "This is too far away from town. This will never sell here." So we went away rather negative. But the business slowed down in El Segundo. So we moved over into Toluca Lake and started selling lots. The first time was about December, 1923.

There were no access as streets are now. Valley Spring Lane was then known as First St., off Lankershim Blvd. That was the only access into Toluca Lake. There were no streets or anything so we started selling lots off a map. In other words, if you came in there and wanted to buy a lot, there was a flat map and you would buy a lot and hope that it was about where I pointed it out.

That was my start in the real estate business and my start in Toluca Lake. What else?

Question: What were lots going for?

Vargo: They varied. Most were 50-ft lots going for $550 to $3500. That's a good question. I could ask it more accurately if I had my data here.

Questioner: I could add a little bit. I bought two of them, $1800 apiece and they were 54 1/2 by 135.

Vargo: That's right but you bought them before the Depression.

Questioner: Oh, yes.

Vargo: The lake . . . when I first came to Toluca Lake, the lake was a tulie bog. To see how Toluca Lake came about you have to see that this whole valley is a big plate surrounded by mountains.

But to answer your question, I came to Toluca Lake in 1923, when there were no roads. I remember we came down what they call Dark Canyon Rd. There was no Riverside Dr. But we came in from the East side, approximately where Moorpark now terminates. There was a two strand wire fence across there. When I got out of the car and stood on the fence, on the wire while the man that was with me, or I was with him,I forgert which, drove across to approximately where Forman St. and Navajo is now.

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The first time we began selling lots there was in December, 1923, about. There was no access streets as there are now. Valley Spring Lane was then known as First St., off Lankershim Blvd. That was the only access into Toluca Lake. There were no streets or anything, so we sold lots off a map. In other words, if you came in there and wanted to buy a lot, there was a plat map. You'd buy it and would hope that it was about where I pointed it out. That was my start in Toluca Lake and my start in the real estate business. What else?

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Public response: If I may add, I bought two for $1800 apiece, 54 1/2 by 135.

Vargo: That's right. But you bought them before the Depression.

Questioner: That's right.

Questioner: What was the lake like?

Vargo: When I first came to Toluca Lake, the lake was a tulie bog. You want to understand, how Toluca Lake came about. This whole valley is like a big plate. Surrounded by mountains, when it rains, all these mountains shed water to the San Fernando Valley.It goes underground. The elevation at Chatsworth is 125 feet above sea level. Toluca Lake is about 550. So Toluca Lake was formed by the outcropping of the water table.

My office stood at the corner of Riverside and Clybourn Ave. At one time the water table was within 16 feet of the surface . Then it went down to 150 feet. Now it is out of sight

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I said I can't sell real estate.But having nothing to do when they opened, I went out there on a Sunday. There were five or six of us in the home. Nothing was happening so they all went out to lunch. So then a couple came in and said what to have. I said we have lots. And then it dawned on me to ask them if they would like to see one. They said yes.

If you ever go through the city of El Segundo, you'll notice that there is a hill in there, near the gas . . . no, the water tank. Or it did have a water tank on top of it.

So I took these people and showed them a corner lot. And they said, We'll take it. So at the end of the day I had made $84. It dawned on me to say, how long has this been going on. So here 52 years later I'm still in the real estate business. But retired now.

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My office stood at the corner of Riverside and Clybourn Ave. At one time the water table was within 16 feet of the surface . Then later it went down to 150 feet. Now it is out of sight but the point I'm making is the water that gathering in the San Fernando Valley naturally drifted to the low point.

Toluca Lak was the outcropping of the water table. And it was a tulie bog and the farmer -- the man that farmed it, naturally watered his horses, his mules, whatever animals he had on the ranch.,

When we subdivided it, one end was blocked by an earth dam which is now the entrance to Toluca Lakeside Golf Course which is now a continuation of Clybourn Ave. and also the entrance to Lakeside Golf Club.

Damming it that way the water eventually raised, but it cause a problem because the whole lake was like a tulie bog and we salesmen used to show off the lake, particularly on Sundays, when most people came, the gas from the decaying tulies would lift up and form like an inland. It was difficult to get rid of because, the fact they tried dynamiting it, because gas under there would hold it together., That was how the lake was formed.

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Question: The people that came and bought this land, from what ethnic background did they come?

Vargo: Orginally, there was a firm of , like Mr. Forman and the Los Angeles Times Chandler interests and Mr. Lankershim bought thousands of acres of land here. The idea was they were going to cut it up into farm land. And they did eventually, see if you look at plats of the Valley, you'll see tract one thousand, that was cut up into acreaage, you see, 10 acres, 20 acres, 40 acres, five acres. That was always a portion of lot one thousand. But the Valley was originally known as the Lankershim Ranch and Land Water Tract.

It was originally subdivided for farming, raising orchards. So Toluca Lake. getting back to your question, was at that time a peach and walnut orchad. Commercial peaches, apricots, apples, walnut trees. Some of the walnut trees, still in existence, that is the original soft shell English walnut. I have a very large one growing in my backyard which still bares fine walnuts but squirrels get it before I do.

Question: Do you sell land all through the Valley or just in the Toluca Lake area?

Vargo: You mean, did I? No, I concentrated on Toluca Lake. You see, when you're in business, time is of the essence, as the contract say. And if I, for instance, have a house for sale in Toluca Lake and then you have one here (Valley College). From here to Toluca Lake is five or six miles. So you can see it wouldn't be wisdom for me to have only one house at this distance and houses scattered through the Valley, because if somebody came to my office, they want to buy in near there. That's the reason they came there. If you try to pull them away and say I have house on Fulton and Burbank Blvd., you see how much time I would use to come over here. You don't sell to the first person. Sometimes you have to show a dozen times. So I stayed right in Toluca Lake. I rarely went across Lankershim Blvd. which is only a mile from my office.

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Questioner: You were saying, when we were driving down, why you wouldn't try to go up in to San Fernando or some other place.

Vargo: Well, it's like everything else, someone said you folks were interested in vocation. You have to specialize. You just cannot conquer the whole world, you know. and be able to anything and everything, especially in the real estate business.

You can sell vacant lots, you can sell houses, you can sell apartments, you can sell business buildings, you can sell factory (industrial land) . But it is best to specialize on one class in an area.

Don't try to sell over the Valley, because you scatter you're time and effort and travel. So I stayed in a very small area, in Toluca Lake and it paid off. Then you become very well versed and you mirror confidence, if a person comes along and says how much is a lot here. Like as Mr. Tayloe says "Eighteen hundred dollars". Now you're selling houses. So you become an authority on value and property values and so on. And when you talk to people you're convincing. . . because you're well versed.

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For instance, if you ask me today, what a piece of property would be in Cango Park, I wouldn't give you an off-hand answer. I would have to go out there and do a little researching, find what goes on and what the property was like, what the potential is and what the surrounding is and what class of property it could be , such as apartments. It could be for business or industrial or single residence.

Question: . . .

Vargo: I have no children so that's a tough question for me to answer. Like some people who say I can tell you how to raise children because I don't have any. So that's tough question for me to answer. In our area . . . the school, the Rio Vista School near Lankershim Blvd. and Moorpark, or below Morepark, was the only school. North Hollywood,there was no high school.

Tayloe: You took a street car there at Lankershim and Chandler and went to Hollywood High School.

Vargo: It takes old timers like you to tell me . . . John Hoak went there. But in later years I can't tell you when North Hollywood came into being at Magnolia and Colfax.

Tayloe: You might be interested to back some of this up. The place next to me with a swimming pool is on the market for $125,000. The next block south with up for $250,000. Now, Andy will verify you can't tell what somebody is going to do, when they look at one.

Vargo: You see I've practically have gone a circle, because when I came to Toluca Lake, as Mr. Tayloe says, we sold vision lots, starting in 1923. Six years later came the big 1929-30 depression. Banks closed and you couldn't sell anything. I sold three lots for a $100 apiece on Bloomfield St. near Strobm. But there was a reason for it, because there was an open ditch across there that later was filled. But it was difficult to sell a lot for $500. The same that Mr. Tayloe a few years earlier paid $1800. But now it has come back. The same lot Mr. Tayloe. He could burn his house down and still get $35,800 for his lot.

Question: Did you ever buy any lots for investment?

Vargo: Oh, no, they couldn't afford to for that purpose. They buy to build on it. Forrest Olson with its many offices and many salespeople . . . I understand Forrest OIson's brother bought a lot on Clyborn Ave. that's 50 by 150 but it's on an angle -- it only squares 47 feet and four inches. He paid $29,500 for it. And he was going to build a house. . . . One of the saving graces . . . one of the good fortunes of Toluca Lake that we have We should be old folks now. We're 40 years old in houses. But people will come down and tear out an old house and build a new one. And as I say, there's Mr. Olson, he paid $30,000 in round figures and his house will cost him $60,000.

That's the reason you have $125,000 for a house. Very difficult for me to realize how inflation has come about, because I have a little house that I built in 1935 . That's 40 years ago. The lot cost $750 and the house cost less than $5,000 to build. Houses are so scarce. My house is only two bedrooms and one bath, 15,000 square feet. One of my neighbors who has been trying to find a house for relative offered me $50,000 for my little house. Now that sounds fantastic but it's true.

Tayloe: I might add just a little in here. My insurance on my house came due. The company wouldn't carry it. "Your house is too old. You'll have to find another company." I had no problem. It was a well built house. I could get a plenty for it. Almost 50 years old, just can't understand. One being maintained.

Vargo: I've been in the insurance business and that's one of the things to be deplored. The insurance companies now -- Mr Tayloe has above average house because he build his house himself. It isn't a commercially built house. And to say that house is uninsurable because it is too old is stupid, because his house is better than a new one. He has all the protective devices on it. One thing they make you do now: say you have a house you've been carrying $20,000 worth of insurance and it cost $30,000 to replace it. The insurance company demands that you carry insurance to value. In other words, you'd have to buy $30,000 worth of insurance. Is this interesting to you?

Audience: Yes. Very interesting. (someone asked, "Tell us more about the effect of inflation."

Vargo: I come for a family you were taught to get value for your dollar, save, save, save. And that's what I've done. You get it drilled into you. . . . The present inflation that startles even me. But the only thing I can offer you youngsters is "Saving never hurt anyone. You better save for a rainy day. Have something back of you." It's like some people like to be heavily in debt. I never could do it, because I'm .. . Number one, if you buy a house, any house, I've always encouraged youngsters to pay the house off. Nowday (the belief is) you have dead money laying in there. You go to work and get the biggest mortgage they can. Take the money and try to speculate with it, and make money. You have to be expert in that as in every line. I advise the youngsters to pay off your house so that it's clear. Then you have no payments to make. Come what may they cannot foreclose on a full house. That's your nest egg. It's a value you find you'll be worth more to yourself and the person you're employed with. You're relaxed. When you're heavily indebt and all, you tensed, because have to make the money or save it by some means or another. Naturally you're worried. You get up in the morning . . . You want me to stop?

The dedication of the pipe organ console at Van Nuys High School on June 4, 1977.

Gaylord Carter was the organist

The tape is all music, including:

1. Themes from great movies
2. Gems from classics
3. Alleluje by Mozart sung by Kathy Chong
4. Music of Irving Berlin
5. Background music for ONE WEEK movie
6. Finale: Hail America by Drumm.

remember seeing the draps drawn.

The cultivated land reach down in back to Bexfort, covering the entire lot from Kittridge to Vanowen, and from Van Nuys Blvd. back to Bexford Ave. Which at one time was called Bonnie Brea.

We lived neighbors to the Whitsetts and many a time I beathed my durkey cot beach, little beach I should say in that irrigation ditch. And the nicest place I should say was right there at the corner. There was a sandpipe there, you remember when the water came over the sandpipe it made the greatest filthiest little pool. It was just great to put your toes through, you know. That was quite a place.

Okay, now let's go to the south end of town. You're familiar with the Whitley estate that became Praisewater's. In its hayday it was much more elegant than we remembered. Across the street was the Werelaw (?) and the Whitsett home. Now we're down the street to the corner, Chandler Blvd. where the great sweep of the boulevard comes around to join our Van Nuys Blvd.

At this point was my favorite house. This was a delightful place. Major Feather (?) home, do any of you remember that. It sat way far back in. I thought of it as looking like a Spanish castle. It was just beautiful. Then one evening, it had acres and acres of landscaping, beautiful trees that when mature and the trees and shrubs grew up you couldn't see the house anymore. All you could see was the tower with the arch and titled roof. You folks know where the Sprague Apartment complex is at the circle. That is where the house was.

Now we're doing to that diamond shape piece of property. It's still there. It's diamond shape. It's filled with buildings, apartment house and commercial buildings. This was originally laid out for a park. Now, doesn't every good town need a park at its entrance? So it had one. I don't know it ever materialized as a park. It's plantings around the outer edges would have done credit to its intentions, believe me, because it was beautiful. I saw a donkey baseball game there at one time that the Allen boys played in. At first, it was just for the community's amusement.

For many, many years there was a very small, modest house set on this diamond, the only building on this whole diamond property, bordered by Chandler Blvd, Circle Drive and Van Nuys Blvd. This house belonged to Dr. Clara Foster. She was one of Indiana's first physicians-surgeons. She had a lovely lawn, lovely yard. This was from the original plantings that had been put there. This went out to the East peak. Incidentally, she was my children's great grandmother.

Now let's go back to town. The Leister House, we talked about on Glimore St., was soon moved around the corner, to the corner of Vesper and Gilmore. I think there's a cue ball parlor there, at least there was 24 hours ago, when I passed it yesterday.

In its stead was built our first super market. It was called the Tower Market. Now you're familiar with what a tower market is. North Hollywood had one, Burbank had one, and this one was a sort of modified Spanish type architecture. L shape and

at the curve of the L was a tower.The one in North Hollywood had a clock. I can't remember whether ours had a clock or not.

(Someone interpreted.)

Reynolds: Did it have a beacon?

(Someone, "it was near the airport.")

Reynolds, You're not putting me on? (Ha, ha) This had adequate parking. There must have been parking for at least 12 cars. (Ha, ha) off of the sidewalk, off of the roadway.They would fold back the doors during the daytime and pull out the vegetable and fruit stand. This had to be pushed back at night time.

Well, at the front of this particular building, there was the Highman (?) drugstore bordering on the boulevard. Highland had moved out from the corner of Steven (?) St.and Van Nuys Blvd. How long has it been that any of you have seen a pharmacist weigh out a little powder on his tiny scale and then mix these powders and very carefully channel them into very large jelliton capsules? Put them into a little box, a neat little box with a paper hinge on it, and then it was stickered with your instructions.

Or how long has it been, that you've seen that pharmacist, walk back to the shelf and take off several very large bottles, mix and measure and pour this horrible liquid. foul smelling and foul tasting, into a bottle for you to take home to shake and take?

With the passing of that particular ritual went the ordors of the apothecary shop. Do you remember how a drug store used to smell? And you remember that chocolate syrup up front at the soda fountain always had a slightly medical taste. And that soda fountain, that great, long sweep of marble where you sat up there on a stool and chatted with your doctor, your druggist and your neighbor. You really did. And you drank 5-cent Cokes then, And you ate 10-cent dishes of ice cream. And 15-cent sodas with a straw that didn't have a hinge in it. It was a rigid straw. Believe me. These are all memories which we share.

And what about the sound of the Valley? Let's talk about the cannery whisles. . .

Oh, I want to tell you, this wasn't the only market in town. This wasn't the only drug store in town. There were many other drug stores down at the far end of town. I think Morey Galen (?) had one, cross on the east side of Sylvan and Van Nuys Blvd. And Hanson & ? had one in the middle of the block. I don't see how so many drug stores could prosper at the same time. But they did. And you always knew the girl behind the counter and the soda fountain. You knew on the other side the girl who sold gum and patent medicine. And you always knew the pharmacist by his first name. That was standard procedure.

Now this flower market wasn't the only market. We had a friendly, a very friendly family market in Van Nuys. Bolanger Bros. it remained for years and years. These nice people charged -- that means gave credit -- delivered and they gave you green stamps at the end of the month when you paid your bill.

Well, we'll go to the sounds . . .similar to use at

that time or at one time at least. The cannery whistle. That loud raucous sound. Did you ever wonder why it had to be so loud? I did. You know we have a lot of industry in the Valley today and each one I'm sure has their own signals behind those walls. The signals of piece and tube: drink coffee, take a lunch break or whatever, punch their time card in the evening. We don't hear the sounds outside the walls, at all.

But those cannery whisles, believe me, blasted out over the whole countryside. And there wasn't just the Van Nuys cannery, down here where the tracks are on Van Nuys Blvd. There was also the d ? cannery over here on Calvert St. and Sylmar. There was the organ factory with its whisle across the street. They not only sounded early in the morning for the employees to go to work but again at noon for them to break for lunch and again in the evening when they were to go home. I have no idea why they had to be so loud. But they were. They were singals for all of us at one time or another.

Do church bells still ring. I see them as I pass the churches but I don't hear them. We used to hear them. Very early in the morning the bell at Saint Elizabeth Church down at Kitterage St.would ring. That was sometimes the signal for mothers to get up and put that chicken and pies in the oven for that Sunday dinner. A little later the Christian church bell at Vesper and Kitterage. And then the missionary church bell over at Hamlin near Sylmar. We heard them all. They were all signals of a sort to us. They not only rang to Sunday morning to call worshipers but they also rang the old year out and the new year in. I don't hear them any more. Maybe they ring.

I found that I could really feel nostagic about. It's the old Pacific Electric car. That was a friendly sound, believe me, whose source we really need in the Valley today. There's little doubt about that.

But this was a very friendly sound. It was particularly friendly, if it was bringing your father home from work or your mother from one of those much needed and frequent shopping trips to the city. You'd see it here as it came around the curve. In the evening often there would be more than one car. There would be two or three fastened together. We could hear the sound of the metal-groved wheels meshing with the metal rails. And if you were anywhere near to town you could hear the clanging of the bell as it came to a stop. Some of us rode those street cars every day for a time. Higher education had not yet come to the Valley.

I'm talking about happy sounds.Do you remember the huffing and puffing of the brickyard kils in the evening. Wasn't that a pleasant sound? It was like a giant breathing or like giant bellows. And it sounded out across the whole countryside, didn't it? You could hear it clear across town everywhere.

The nights were vague, because street lights were no where near so bright as they are now. And our lovely clostured lights on the green metal standards we had all the way up and down the boulevard gave adequate light. And then close to the main streets on the side streets there was the metal standard with the one large (beer ?) and it was plenty of light for us at

that time.

Out on Vanowen and over on Kester we had a large incandescent bulb with a corrugated reflector on it and these were on telephone poles. Do you remember that? In spite of that, we weren't afraid of the night. even when we were quite young we'd walk home from a friend's house. The friend would walk part way with us. The night had no terror or fear. And the walk part way home with us was to continue your conversation and the fun but also to equal the distance walked both. We called it walking a way. Do you remember that? Locked doors were unheard of in the day time. Really. I'm so in the habit now of locking the doors to go into the house from our yard that sometimes we'll be working in the yard. My husband will be working in the backyard and I'll go in first and I'll lock the door and I don't realize I've locked him out until I hear him calling at the backdoor. But this is standard procedure for everyone to lock.

Do you remember you knew when you left one town in the Valley and entered another? And the West Valley wasn't a fit place to live at all. Believe me, it's funny now. Isn't it, if you've driven out there lately. We're over here in the East Valley. We've not in the center of things any more. Out there where it used to be the Tullies, that's the big center of everything. But it was windy out there, And there was a multitude of tumbleweeds. And you remember Canoga Park had little chance of survival. That's funny, too. Isn't it? The West Valley was good for bean crops. That's funny, too.

We had two choices to get over the hill in the south. We could go down to Cahuenga Pass or we could go over to Topanga Canyon. Those were our two choices.

And you filled very available flower bowl with yellow violets during a hike in our foothills. Mary Jane, do you remember that the yellow violets. And everyone turned out for the Armistice Day Parade every November 11th.

I promised to ramble and I did through quite a few yesteryears. And with your permission, if I have five more minutes, I will tell you about a very frightening encounter I had with an Indian. No less than an Indian in the center of Van Nuys.

(A plane goes overhead. People say they can't hear.)

This will tell you more than one thing about our town. We had a large furniture store in the very center of town between Sylvan Street and Friar. And the furniture store was owned by a very dear man by the name of Mr. Langam ?. Mr. Langam was Mr. Nordfall's father. Our families were close and this dear man had taken the place for me of my beloved grandfather, that I had left in the north when we came down here.

Mr.Langam was not only the town's furniture dealer but also the town's undertaker. A mortician he was not. He was an undertaker. And this particular building was also housed the undertaking parlor. It also housed the post office in Van Nuys. The post office was at the front of the building on the right in front of the store rooms. This was very early. I used to like to go down there after school. usually hippy hopping that was the fastest way to get any place, when you're young. You also call it

skipping too.

I would go down there, especially if my father was helping Mr. Langam uncrate furniture, which he frequently did. But on this particular occasion I went down there and when I opened the door there was no one there, no one except the postal employee to the front.I didn't see my dad and I didn't see Mr Langam.But in back of the postal department -- that didn't take much space -- believe me. The full length of the store was the storeroom. And it still seems as long as a tunnel to me.

So I went to the storeroom and opened the door and looked in. And I saw no one at first. The room was pretty dark. It was dark except for one lightbulb hanging from a single cord. Remember, lightbulbs used to hang from single cords.

About half way down the room and far to the right, I looked out to the backyard. We didn't have any alleys then, just the backyard. We could see my father and Mr. Langam uncrating furniture. I closed the storeroom door behind me and started down this long way. I got to the middle of the room where the lightbulb hung -- a point of no return, you understand -- I looked to the right -- and lying on a slab was a very real, very dead Indian. His black hair falling off the gurmey.

I took off. I think probably my father and Mr. Langam were very happy, though. Happy it wasn't a pack of hounds chasing me and it was only a dead Indian that had brought on this hysteria. I should have dried up in my father's arms to begin the way.

The previous evening Mr. Langham called my father and asked him to go out to Calabasas with him to pick up the body of an Indian. And I always imagined this Indian -- I don't know I ever verified it or confirmed it -- I always imagined this Indian was lying out under a tree. The poor fellow my have died in a very orthodox bed. You know, I just had a feeling that they picked him up out under a tree somewhere. In any event the storeroom lost its luster for me, believe me, and for some time.

I've shared a lot of memories of yesteryears and I wish there was time, perhaps there's a few moments. Is there any correction, addition or questions. Is there someone that would like to share your favorite memories about the way we were back when.

Questioner: "I was one of those people who worked . . . (so soft spoken as to be uncomprehensible.) . . . I was one of those people who worked behind the soda fountain."

Reynolds: Did you? Why did that chocolate syrup have a medicinal flavor? Originally it was not in these push things. It was in a crock-like jar with a crome top. It was exposed, more or less exposed. It did pick up the medicinal orders. I wasn't kidding. It was true. It did have a medicinal taste to it.

Questioner: We hear years of scrubbing of . . . where else Ventura Blvd.

Reynolds: We could hear it clear across town.

Questioner: You mention the animal farm on Ventura Blvd.up there baboons , etc.

Reynolds: Right That was up there near Thousand Oaks . . . before the freeway went in. . .

Questioner: Right here. You could hear the baboons.

Reynolds: You're talking about Van Nuys.

Questioner: Up on Ventura Blvd. three or four block from Sepulveda Blvd. You could hear the exotic birds.

Reynolds: That was Frank Gower's place. Was it not?

Questioner: Yes, it was.

Reynolds: You're right. It had great big macaws. I remember that.There was a jungle land up near Thousand Oaks, I thought you were refering to. That was there for years.

Questioner: Old station. Do you remember that?

Reynolds: My father did buy the old Pacific Electric Station.

Questioner: I was just thinking today that there was a pioneer family . . . There was a very close connection in the old days. . . .

Dodson: Another very fine gift has come from Mr. Van Meter in our public speaking system.From Mr . and Mrs. Lane we have received a shawl.It may have been a cover for an upright piano. May be 100 years old. The shawl is a Spanish type and a very beautiful thing. We have two gifts that came in today. One from Mr. DeCarlo consists of aerial views of Van Nuys from 1923, 37, 47, . . .That will make a nice sequence to show the growth of the Van Nuys area. Another gift is from Larry Jorgenson.

" presented with 22 books today on California in general. One will be especially valuable to us because it is a master's thesis written at U.S. on the history of the San Fernando Valley with particular reference to the town of San Fernando itself. We get all sorts of questions on the Valley and we try our best to find the answers. So this will be very valuable to us as a source of reference. Then we have also from him a book on the California heritage which is a miniature of what is written about the State of California. And several other books on the Missions.

I have also been asked about the summer hours for the museum. We operate on a rather informal basis. This summer the college is not opened in the afternoon and we normally are. Summer school will run for six weeks. It runs in the morning and night but not in the afternoon. So we will be operating on a rather insecure foundation since this place is pretty dead in the afternoon in the summer.But call and be sure I'm here. I'll be glad to open the museum at any time for anyone liking to go through. The second six weeks the college is closed because we have no classes. It is opened for registration. Our next regular meeting will be the first Monday in October.

Sears:I don't know if you've seen the folder on the Museum. It is a good one. It is the work of Dr. Dodson and the very fine lady who assists him.

We're open to suggestions for future programs. If you have any ideas, let us know. or call Dr. Dodson.

Dodson: Today we have Malcolm Sears. He'll share with us his memories of many wonderful things.

Sears; You know a computer chip stores thousands of bits of information. My mind doesn't do as well. When you think about your memory, it's a real fragile thing. It's affected by a lot of different things: your sex, your age, your background, etc

When you go to retrieve that information. . . Whenever I think about the red cars, I think about the trolley cars . . . Memory does funny things . . .

I was born in Van Nuys in 1918. I met my wife in second grade. That was the biggest thing that ever happened to me. I went to Van Nuys high school and graduated in 1934. I was just an ordinary student there. But Margaret was a scholarship leader. . . She went to work and I went to college. Believe me, a professor there said, "I believe you'd be interested in the University of California at Davis. In 1934 we drove up to Davis. I asked a fellow if he knew where I could get a job. He said yes. It paid 35 cents an hour. That was a lot of money in those days.

I graduated in 1940, three years for my agricultural teaching credentials. I got married in 1941. I had my first job in Paso Robles. I returned to San Fernando Valley, Van Nuys, in 1947. I got a job at Pierce College . . . They needed an agriculture teacher at Van Nuys High School. So I interviewed, guess who? Mr. Hubbard. They hired me. My wife went to college and got her degree. We had three kids. They went to Van Nuys Elementary School. Guess who their principal was? Mr. Reese. They all went to college. (One of his boys is an authority on rudbaukias.) My daughter got her degree in horiculter from Davis. Now at Cal State Pomona.

Okay, so we came to Van Nuys in 1918. Everything seems to be related but more so then. My father came to Van Nuys because he had a job at Bolanger's grocery store. . . He was involved in a milk delivery business. While he was delivering milk, he got a contract with the L.A. school district to deliver kids from West Valley to Van Nuys. He drove the first school buse. My mother drove one. . . the whole thing was taken over by the L.A. school distrist in the middle or late thirties. So there were a lot of relationships.

So we're going back to 1918 . . . The Christian church. I've got to tell you a story. The Red Car from downtown L.A. to Van Nuys. They'd give you a big dinner. The salesman would say, "what do you think of the property." My friends said, "Fine, we'd like to make a down payment." He pulled out a five dollar bill and that was the down payment on the property. The property we're talking about was on Van Nuys Blvd.

So Jorkan build a dozen houses immediately. He sold those and other properties. Things were really booming.

Back to 1918 again. My mother ran the Christian church. He (?)asked my mother why she didn't consider buying an acre of land and building something on it. My mother didn't have any money but she did have some inheritance fund. So her dad had retired from the farm. Her brothers sent her inheritance which was a $1,000. She got the money and bought the acre.

It was right next door to Kester and Vanowen. Incidentally, on one side of the land was a good looking . .. tree. The first thing we did on this one acre was to go to the Army and Navy store where they sold everything. . . . They put up an outhouse.

In 1920 when we bought the acre. At that time there was a

dirty flu epidemic. My mother and I came down with the flu. The doctor couldn't make all the rounds. So a next door neighbor took care of us. She was a nurse in World War I. She took care of us. The interesting thing about Mrs. Newbury was she had us memorize all kinds of Bible stories. Believe it or not, I memoriized the first song from the 51st book of Isaiah. . .

In those days people who lived on the outskirts of town had (not so good houses). People who lived in town had proper houses. On the outskirts we had these funny little types of houses. . .

How did you live in those conditions . . . As for hot days we had what was called an evaporated cooler. . . Another problem was the wind. The dust, the real fine dust. You couldn't see anything. Everybody had the problem. Nobody worried very much about that. What really worried people was the winter rains and floods. Flooding was a real problem. If they had put it a little further West, we would have avoid the flooding along Tyrone and other streets. You all remember the two major rivers were Tyrone and Kester. Up above the railroad tracks in Van Nuys was Raynor Power. Underneath the trestles ran the water.

Rain water from the hills filling the Valley with alluvian soil, which is The house builders in these flooded areas got what they asked for. The wash between Van Nuys and North Hollywood was a no-man's land with wash and gravel. There was nothing there.

Van Nuys was situated right between a river . . .The water would come down in high rolls like you wouldn't believe. The streets weren't paved. The gravel

Now here is something I want to check you out on. I've never heard of anyone ., . In 1922 or 23 I was going to grammar school or something like that. We were all out there on the Tyrone side of the elementary school. A guy tried to cross the Tyrone with two horses and a wagon. Believe it or not, he didn't make it., The horses got tied up in their harnass. They got washed down to Gilmore and Fitte(?). That was the end of that. Does anyone remember that.

(Someone acknowledges it) Sears' response: Good for you. Otherwise it would have been no more than a dream.

. . . he caused the water to diverted over to the Kester side. . .

Okay. Floods were that thing. You couldn't go to Reseda or Canoga Park, because of the high water. A lot of people were lucky if they had a 30-inch wheel. Half of that is 16 and half inches. That made it high off the ground. Some people put an inner tube around the tire. That would allow you a little more height. The Model T (Ford) had a hang down carburetor. If the water was 30 inches deep you could make it. If it was 31 inches deep you'd stall out. People who drove to places in the Valley knew that's the way it was. (laughter).

Those were the days when flooding was a problerm. Van Nuys Blvd. had its street car tracks and poles in the center of the street, providing a problem. The water would run down sidewalk. The store owners would have to sandbag their businesses, year after year. There was a problem for people wanting to cross. It

emained a problem until the middle fifties, when the U.S. Army got some real good flood control that we have right now.

Something I was interested in in 1924. A fellow living across the street, by the name of Gene Beach (?), He came to Van Nuys and worked in ? . a contractor and cabinet maker . He came over to my mother one day and asked her if he could , I remember all my life. He had a black chevy touring car (1924), called a Baby Grand.

It had a four cylinder overhead valve engine. So we took it out to the area of the Panorama Ranch. When we got there, I noticed everybody was walking over to a big pile of dirt. When I got a little closer, I noticed that on top of the pile of dirt was men shooting down into this pit. We saw they were killing hundreds of dairy cows.

How many dairies were cleaned out like that? (reply from one in the crowd was not clear.) I talked to a big rancher, an old timer, from San Luis Obispo .I thought it occurred in 1925. He said it was in 1924. He said that in San Louis Obispo County they had those vans that you walked through. But they didn't kill any cattle up there because they didn't have a need.

(Someone interpreted to say they didn't have any need in Ventura County.)

That's still the treatment even today for hoof and mouth. Kill the cattle and bury them. Hoof and mouth is all over Europe. No one wants to see the vaccine coming into the United States. That would . . . I never forgot that.

(Another interruption)

Another thing that was really a problem living under those conditions were the flies. How many remember at the corner of LeMay (?) Street and Kester a fellow who had two sons had a big pen full of horses and mules. North of Vanowen as far as you could go were chicken ranches. And the flies were really a problem. During the Forties the chicken ranches were cleared out of here. There were a lot of people raising chickens. Some of them made it and some didn't.

What was it like to go down Van Nuys Blvd. in those days? Well, here's what my mother and I did. It wasn't much. Things weren't really jumping in those days. No radio. No nothing. We'd go down on Saturday night in a Model T Ford. We'd go down to Van Nuys Blvd., park your car and watch the people go by. (laughter) I still like to do that. The best place to watch the people go by was somewhere at the corner of Sylvan and Van Nuys Blvd., especially this side. You went early. Somebody backed up and you were right their to get the place and watch the people go by. Anyway,

Anyway at the corner of Van Nuys Blvd and Sylvan was the California Bank, the law office . . .also Dr. Kamp(?). I've got to tell you something about the California Bank. I've talked to you about this before. The manager's name was Tittle (?). Nobody's related to Mr. Tittle. He was the fellow who caused the foreclosure on hundreds of pieces of property here in the Valley. They got wealthy doing that. Anyway, he was the manager of the bank.

On the other side, just south of bank was the . . . grocery

store. That was really some store. You had a phone you could phone in your order. They would deliver and charge you. I don't know how long that continued. During the depression it must have been very hard to collect the money. Anyway that was the . . . grocery store. When do you think the store closed up?

Someone comments: After the war. Another, later than that.

South of the Voyager on the same side of the street was the Western Auto Store and a few other things. I can't remember too much about them. There was the Van Nuys Hotel that started in 1911. Across the street on the east side was . .. (end of tape)

If you didn't have a phone you could take a lift there.